

Desiring What Is

(Note: This article is translated into Spanish [here](#) and Portuguese [here](#).)

The Buddha spoke about desire. He said that desire is the cause of all suffering—the root of all suffering. Desire is a very juicy word. It's got to be if it's going to have that much power that it can cause all of the suffering in the world. He didn't say most of the suffering or a lot of the suffering, but all of it—every single contraction of being is caused simply by desire. So, it's a very powerful force. So, it's worth looking into this thing that can cause all of the suffering you have ever experienced.

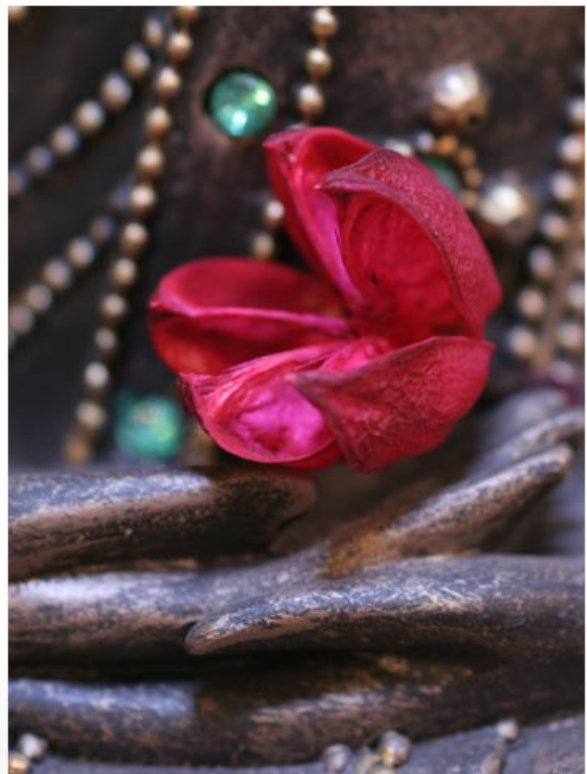
One of the things you can notice about desire—a very obvious thing that gets overlooked—is that every desire is a lie. Every desire is based on the idea that things can be different than they are, and that's just never been true. Things have never been different than they are in that moment. You can even see how this lie might come to be because things almost always are different than they were, but they just are never different than they are. They are always the way they are. So, in observing this, we start to think that we can take this constantly changing “the way things are” and decide how it's going to be next. That's also based on a lie. You can just look in your own experience. How often has it worked? How often have things turned out exactly the way you wanted them to be, the way you desired them to be? Unfortunately, every now and then it happens, so we get hooked—like with a slot machine. Every now and then we get what we desired. But it's a matter of random luck. If you desire enough things, every now and then you're going to get it right.

What people often do when they see this lie is accept the way things are. It's funny, though, in plain old acceptance there can be a sense of being defeated—a sense of resignation: I'll accept what is, but I don't have to like it! There can be that quality to acceptance. So, I invite you to consider another possibility. It's a strange possibility, but it's actually very wonderful in its results. And that is to actually desire what is: meet what is with that same passion that you may have had for what could be or what you think should be happening. Meet what is with that kind of passion, with that force that is able to generate all the suffering in the world. Bring that force to bear on what is—on the truth instead of on a lie.

There's another word for this—gratitude. It's different than just accepting. Accepting is somehow lifeless; it lacks passion or juice. That's why even though people may get that things are the way they are, they often go back to the “juice” of wanting things to be different. At least in desiring there's drama, there's intensity, passion, and life, even if it does result in suffering. But there is this other possibility: actually desiring what is wholeheartedly, really truly saying yes to this moment, to what is, exactly the way it is right now, bringing that kind of passion and aliveness to the way things are. This brings instant unlimited happiness because every desire is fulfilled.

The reason that people don't make this simple but radical choice to want “what is” is because it is so simple. You don't even have to raise a finger. Nothing is needed. People shy away from this because in wanting what is the job description of the ego becomes “do nothing.” There just really isn't anything left to do for the ego, for who you thought you were. That's the price to be paid: to truly want what is, you have to give up the idea of being someone who can change what is. There's no longer a place for that. Changing anything would be working at cross-purposes to what you desire.

Then you come up against this inescapable paradox that even your desire for things to be different than they are is something that you need to desire as it is. You can't leave that out. You can't leave out these desires that rise up—for a relationship or for money or for spiritual awakening or for the Truth. You have to meet those with this same gratitude. To realize that your own suffering has to be met with gratitude totally breaks open your heart.



Often when people are on a spiritual path, seeking the Truth, it's just another more subtle, sophisticated, dressed-up desire because the Truth is right here, right now. No seeking is required. The Truth has never been anywhere but right here, right now. People who are seeking the Truth are really seeking after a better truth than the one they've got. It's another form of desire. The invitation is to meet even that desire with gratitude. You have to want to want the Truth if that is what is present, even though wanting it is an impossibility and based on a lie. You still just open your arms and say yes.

You're never done. You're never done being grateful because what is, is always changing, always new. Every moment is fresh; it doesn't have any reference. It is a completely new chance to be grateful. Whatever is happening has never happened before—whatever emotions, thoughts, sensations, and experiences are happening are completely fresh and new right now. The opportunity to meet them with gratitude and passionately desire "what is" is always available. You never run out of things to be grateful for.

There is an interesting thing that happens when you desire what is: you start to desire what will be. In desiring what is, you step into where it is going; you step into the flow, into this mysteriously unfolding, ever-new moment. This powerful force called desire can either cause all the suffering in the world or—when turned to right here, right now—become this incredible power for flow, for beingness.

When that starts to happen, it is easy to get overly intrigued with that. It becomes this really fun thing—to apparently be manifesting something. It's actually a complete mystery how those two things are connected—your wanting something to happen and it happening. It would be just as accurate to say that it is a form of premonition. So, when that flow is happening, the temptation can be to get so intrigued with that, that you start to play with that. The second you get intrigued with how things are getting easier, it's like saying I'm grateful for the Truth as long as this flow-thing is happening. It's easy to be grateful when you're in the flow, and it's not that there's anything wrong with it. But if you get too interested in the flow and turn away from this mysterious meeting of the moment with gratitude, then your gratitude is no longer unconditional.

You have to be willing to throw your heart open with gratitude even before there's any sense of the flow, to be willing to do that even when flow is a distant, vague memory. That's where the life is, that's where the juice is coming from, even this apparent flow. And the other thing about flow is that sometimes the shortest path between two points is through Hell, and that's the way flow is going to go sometimes. So, if you have the idea that flow looks like a flat tire being fixed really fast, you might discover that flow has a very different idea about how long you will be on the side of the highway and how late you will be to your next appointment.

It's not up to you how much suffering arises, which is devastating news to who you think you are if you are trying to get out of suffering. The good news is that it is up to something that is incredibly, profoundly wise, something that can see that the shortest path between two points goes through Hell sometimes. And sometimes it goes through heaven. It has no preference. It just sees where this unfoldment needs to go right now, and it doesn't hold back. That's what has been happening all along. Has your life stopped unfolding ever in spite of how often it seems not to have gone where you wanted it to go? It still goes, right? Something is in there steering it, unfolding it.

It's not some Truth "out there" that we need to be grateful for, some Truth that will show up some time in the future. It's right here, right now—just exactly the way everything is right now. Nothing is left out. Recognizing that whatever is, is only here for this moment—it's only available in this moment and will never be available just this way again—gives us this juice, this passion to meet it with gratitude.

The reason we don't dive in with gratitude in moments of suffering or pain is because there is a mistaken attitude that if we do that, things will stay the same. We think that by loving this moment the way it is and all of its pain (if that's what is present), we will get stuck, when actually the opposite is true.

It makes sense for us to want to go to battle with our conditioning, which is behind our suffering, because our conditioning is so obviously a lie and it doesn't feel enlightened to have that conditioning, but when you fight it, it makes it seem really big. You've made it into something, as if it had anything to do with who you really are. On the other hand, if you take the perspective of desiring it instead of fighting it, you can see how ridiculous it is and laugh at it, and then it loses its potency. It is no longer a problem. It no longer controls you. It's just arising, and you're saying, "Great, wonderful, what a gas!" Then, it never even has a chance to turn into something called suffering. The event appears and the conditioned reaction to it appears, and a complete enjoyment of both happens, so any possibility of suffering is immediately swallowed. It's not like we are unfamiliar with this process; this happens whenever something goes right. Every moment can be like this, where everything shows up, but nothing is a problem. Then, nothing that happens controls you.

What cuts through any suffering is simply choosing what is in every moment. It's not some complicated formula. It's simply meeting what is with passion and gratitude. It really isn't up to you how many times your conditioning keeps appearing. If it were up to you, it would have been done a long time ago, right?

So the invitation is to find out for yourself what happens when you are willing to waste your desire on what is. Don't take my word for it. For just this moment, you can meet whatever is present with a passionate embrace. And then see if you can truly find any suffering here in this moment.